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# GEOGRAPHICAL

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# Don Quixote's Country



*All photographs by Patellani, from Pictorial Press*

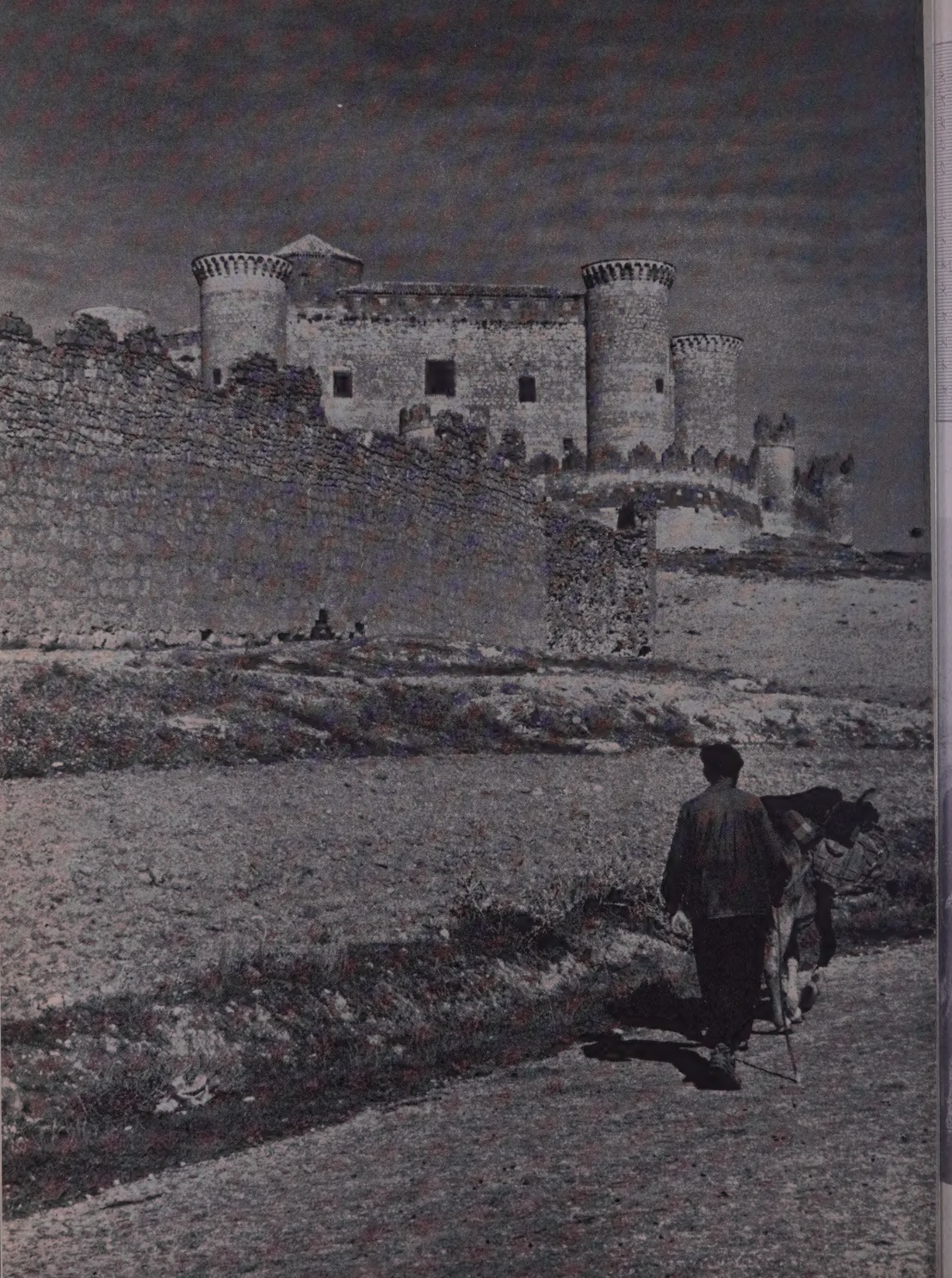
South of Madrid, covering most of the provinces of Toledo, Ciudad Real, Albacete and Cuenca, lies the great plain of La Mancha. This is Don Quixote's country. Cervantes placed his novel in its background with more thoroughness than almost any author. Apart from Don Quixote's birthplace, which he purposely left vague, the scenes of all the knight's adventures are much as they were in the 17th century. Cervantes knew La Mancha well himself, and he described it so that the visitor immediately feels he has been there before. And if La Mancha and its people were portrayed by Cervantes, Quixote in his turn has left his mark behind. Not only are restaurants named after him. Dulcinea's coat-of-arms—posthumously awarded—can be seen in El Toboso. The windmills at which Quixote tilted are still there. The fireside stories of old women tell of him.

Cervantes dealt faithfully by La Mancha, but this is not true of his illustrators. Of these, Gustave Doré and George Cruikshank are probably the most famous. They both present a landscape far removed from its true aspect. (Above) The Venta de Malabrigo, one of the many inns in which Quixote and Panza stayed. (Right) Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in hill country which owes more to Cruikshank than to nature as it is in La Mancha's open spaces

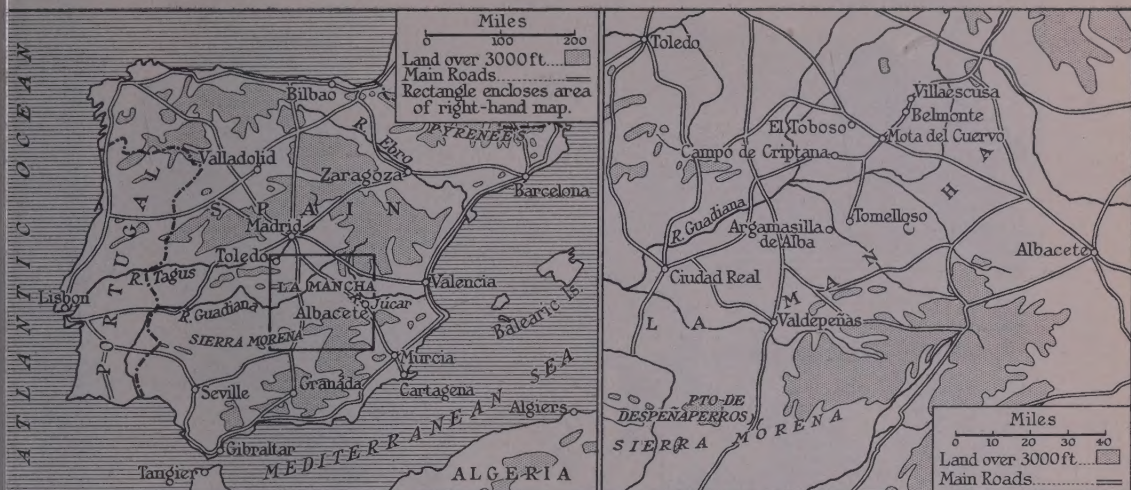


*British Museum*









(Above) The map shows the Spain of *Don Quixote* in relation to the main features of the country. (Opposite) The castle of Belmonte is like the one behind Don Quixote in Henry Alken's drawing (below): some illustrators did manage to catch the reality as well as the spirit of La Mancha

A. J. Thornton

British Museum



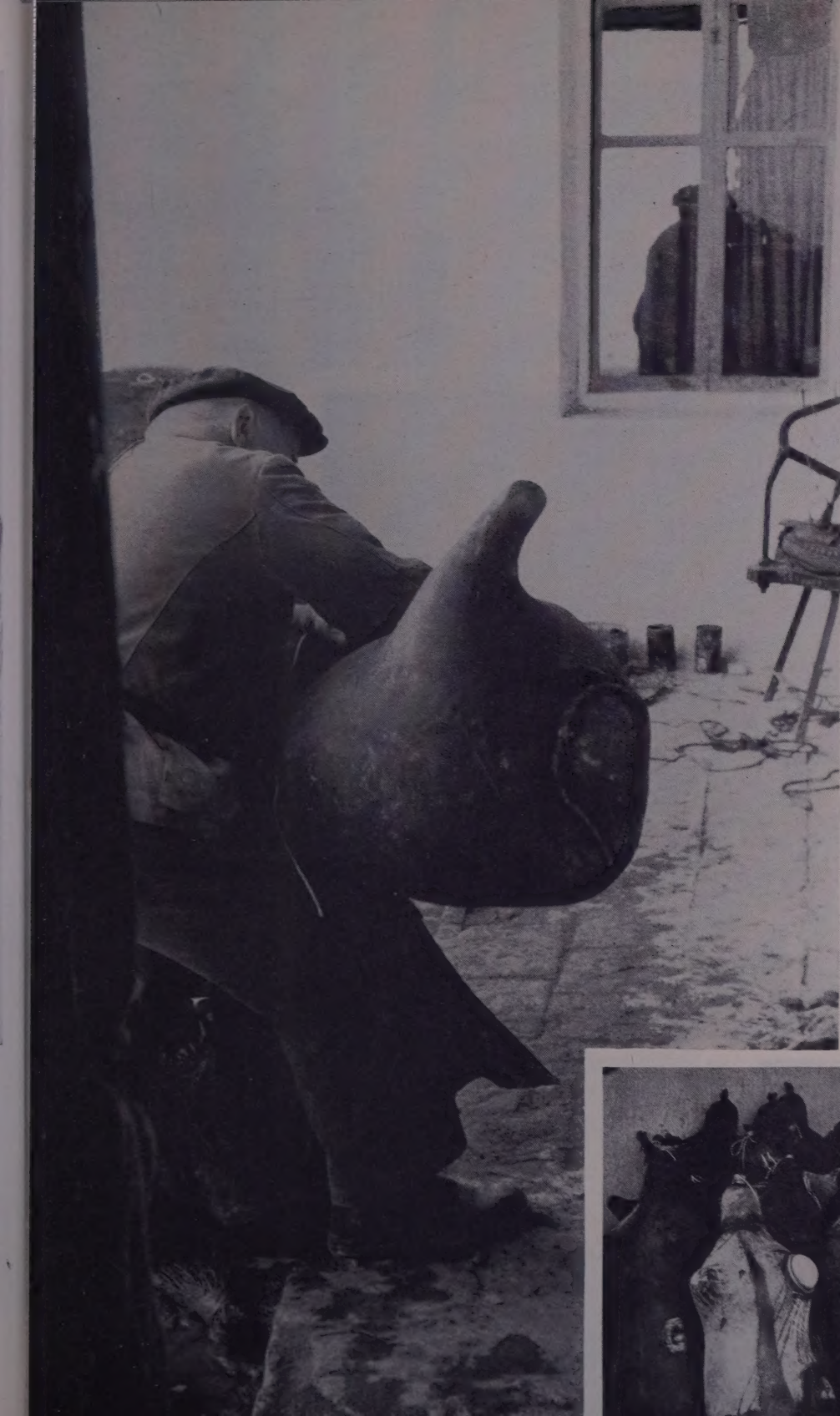




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(Above) Don Quixote's victorious battle with the wine-skins, as it was depicted by Cruikshank.  
 (Right) Inside a modern workshop for the manufacture and repair of *botos* in Valdepeñas, the wine district of La Mancha. Wine from such skins consoled Sancho Panza in times of stress









British Museum





*opposite)* Inns in La Mancha are much the same  
 day as they always were. La Venta de Don  
 Quixote is where the Hidalgo was 'knighted'.  
 differs but little from the other inn where  
 aritornes played so cruel a trick on the un-  
 fortunate knight, and the stables of the Venta  
 Don Quixote still shelter modern Rozinantes.  
*right)* Don Quixote as Alken saw him on his  
 st vigil, as he stood watching over his arms by  
 e well at the inn where he was knighted.  
*elow)* The same well as it appears nowadays



British Museum





The illustrators of *Don Quixote* tended to draw the windmills they knew, rather than those which were really to be found in La Mancha. Doré made them imposing, faintly Gothic. These, in Cruikshank's version, have an oddly mixed ancestry, as well as being mechanically unworkable

British Museum







*Pictorial Press*

This is how Don Quixote's 'giants' really looked. There are now only five of these white-painted stone windmills left, near the town of Campo de Criptana, and most of them have been restored



# The Regent's Park

by  
ANN COX-JOHNSON



*All reproductions by courtesy of St Marylebone Public Libraries Committee*

**Willan's Farm, about 1800, by an unknown artist. The Regent's Park Lake now covers its site**

IN the north-west of London, below the heights of Hampstead and Highgate, lies an area of land that has always been associated with the Crown and is now known as the Regent's Park. It is roughly circular, covers 472 acres and is nearly three miles around. It is one of London's few completely successful pieces of planning, and its beautiful landscape designs of fine terraces and villas reflect the genius of its planner, John Nash.

Several books and many articles have been written about the architecture of the Regent's Park, and these have often led people to ask, 'What was there before Regent's Park? What was it like before Nash laid it out?'

The area was originally a part of the Manor of Tyburn, recorded in Domesday Book as belonging to the Abbess of Barking under the Crown, and called Marylebone Park. Queen Elizabeth entertained a Russian embassy with hunting in it in 1600, and when, in 1611, James I sold the

Manor of Tyburn to Edward Forset, he retained the Park. The Manor subsequently changed hands, becoming part of first the Holles, then the Portland and finally the Howard de Walden estates; but the Park remained in royal hands. In 1646, Charles pledged it against his debts to Sir George Strode and John Wanderford, and they succeeded in regaining it after the Restoration, but not before it had been deparked and turned into farm land during the Commonwealth. As farm land it remained throughout the 18th century.

To the south, London was growing outward and the Portland and Portman estates were developing rapidly. In 1708 there were open fields here; Rocque's survey of 1745 shows the sides of Cavendish Square built, and Horwood's plan of 1794 a built-up area from Oxford Street to the New Road. The New Road—now the Marylebone Road—had been marked out by A



of Parliament in 1757 to run between Paddington and Islington, providing a ring road to divert traffic from crowded Oxford Street and Holborn, and to solve in particular the problem of driving herds of sheep and cattle to Smithfield Market without taking them through the town. It was, in fact, the first by-pass. The New Road marked the boundary of polite society for more than fifty years. Princess Amelia might live in Cavendish Square, and Mrs Montagu might queen it over other learned ladies at her salon in Portman Square; Sir Richard Kaye, the aristocratic rector of St Marylebone, could venture to live near his church in Devonshire Street, but no-one lived on the far side of the New Road, excepting John White, the Surveyor to the Duke of Portland, who loved the rural atmosphere of the place and built himself a fine square house among the fields on the southern boundary of what was to become Regent's Park.

Around the turn of the century two plans were made of the area, one by John Fordyce, the Crown Surveyor, in 1794, and the other by John White in 1804; the Duke of Portland controlled over half of the parkland, under lease from the Crown, and so was very interested. The plans

show that, though the Marylebone Turnpike Trust held a couple of acres on the New Road, and there were a few private houses, it was divided chiefly between three farms. The largest of the three was the Mary-le-bone Park Farm, the concern of a Mr Thomas Willan, who had 279 acres. Then there was William Kendall's farm of 154 acres, and a smaller one of 117 acres belonging in 1794 to Richard Mortimer and in 1804 to Thomas Rhodes. The field names run off the tongue—Long Mead, Rugg Moor, Lodge, Bell and White House Fields, Long Forty Acres and Short Forty Acres, Dupper Field, Nether Paddock and Salt Petre Field. The farms were primarily for dairy cattle, and Willan, Kendall and Mortimer grew their own hay, to judge from water-colours of the period.

On the two larger farms were groups of buildings, some of them unexpected in character. Thomas Willan lived in a snug brick cottage near the cow-sheds—it was called a cottage, because the Old Farm House was let to a Mr Thomas Ward. It seems possible that he was a relation of James Ward the artist, whose painting of cattle in Marylebone Park, made in 1807, is now in the Tate Gallery. There were eighteen other cottages

**The Jew's Harp Tea Gardens, Marylebone Fields, in 1800: from a contemporary painting**







A fashion plate for Winter 1838-39, set in Regent's Park, by then London's most elegant quarter. The Colosseum and Sussex Place are in the background



around these two, chiefly of lath-and-plaster. Several were rented to well-to-do Londoners as week-end cottages, for there was a desire for fresh air and to 'get away from it all' even in the 18th century. A Mr Moore had a summer-house with a shed and a garden, and the Revd Dr Fountaine had a cottage and garden. He had been the headmaster of the school in the old Manor House in Marylebone High Street. A Mr Esdaile had a 'Neat Cottage and Garden, with an Inclosure in front thereof' for a rent of £28 a year. The owners guarded their privacy jealously. J. T. Smith, in his *Book for a Rainy Day*, tells us that one old gentleman put up an inscription: 'Steel traps and spring-guns *all over* these grounds. N.B. Dogs trespassing will be shot.'

Fifty yards from Willan's farm was the Jew's Harp Tavern. It had a long room on the first floor, reached by an external staircase, where dances were given. Outside was a wooden, semi-circular arbour, divided into bays with a painted wooden soldier at the entrance to each, where tea and other refreshments could be taken. The proprietor, advertising in 1785 in the *Morning Chronicle*, said that he had 'a stock of the best Wines, Spirituous Liquors, Cyder, Perry, Fine Ales, etc.' Rose gardens were laid out, and there were skittle alleys. Even the proximity of a small copal varnish factory did not lessen the popularity of the Jew's Harp, which to some extent had replaced Marylebone Gardens, closed in 1778, as a rendezvous.

A little further to the south-west, on Kendall's farm, was the Queen's Head and Artichoke public house. People claimed that it had been built by Queen Elizabeth's gardener—hence the name—although we have no documentary evidence for this. From 1798, Charles Rossi, the sculptor, leased a cottage, an artificial stone manufactory and a stable near the inn, for which he paid the then large rental of £52 10s. Artificial stone was much used for garden ornaments and funeral monuments during the latter half of the 18th century and the early 19th. The most famous artificial stone manufactory was Eleanor Coade's, and Rossi had worked for her for some time. James Wyatt, the architect, had 'a small cottage, Carpenter's Yard, and Workshops, Stable, Yard and Shed Buildings' among the fields too, and there was a wheelwright's yard near by, owned by Messrs Chedwick and Bell. In addition to these, there were, around 1800, four masons' yards and a saw-pit in Portland Row on the New Road.

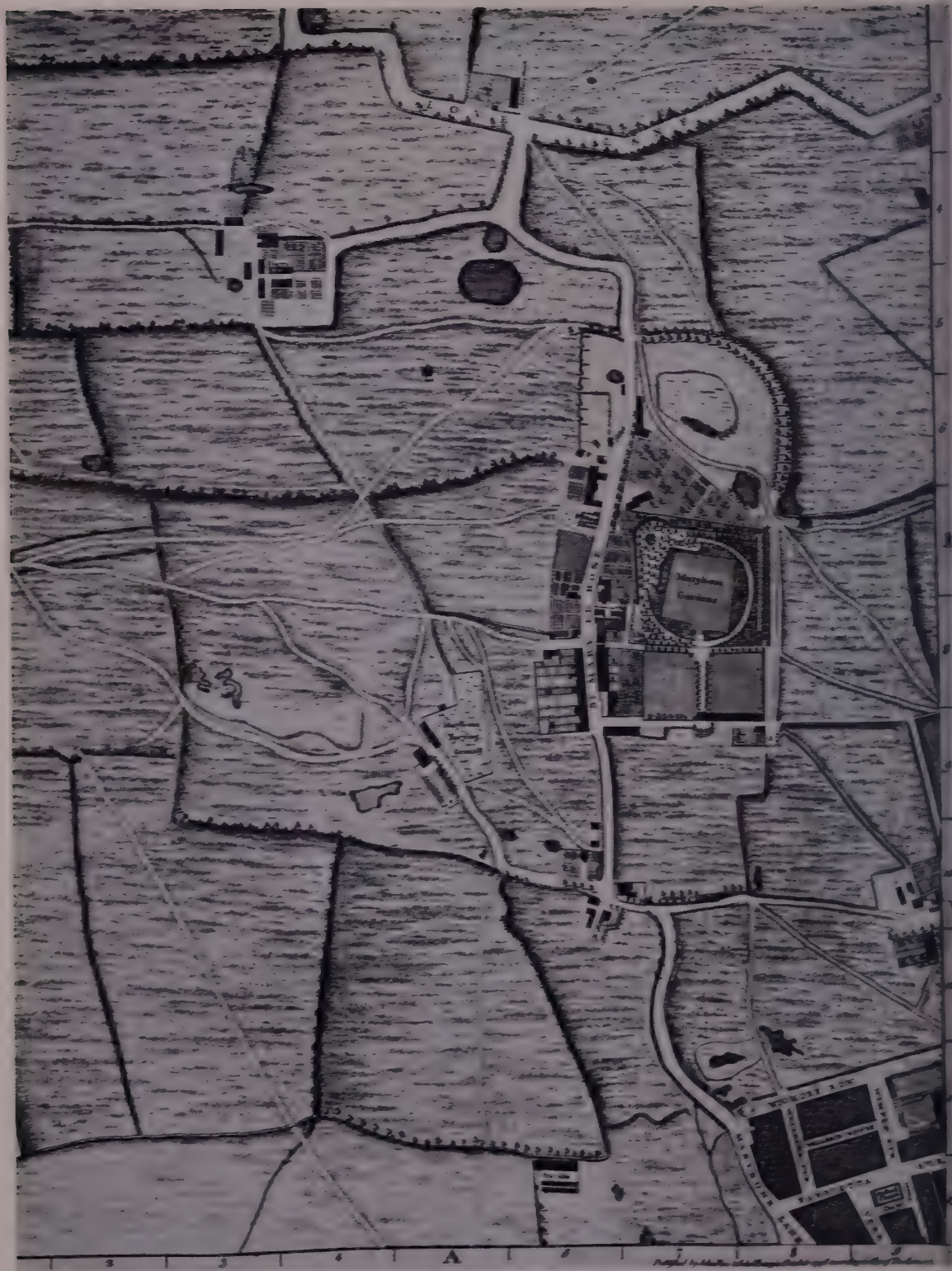
But the most astonishing building in the Park only lasted for three years. It was the temporary gallery erected in 1803 to house a collection of Old Masters belonging to Count Joseph Truschess, who had brought it with him from Vienna. The problem of transporting the collection to London during the Napoleonic Wars seemed to have been a minor one. A letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1803 recommended that the pictures should be bought to start a National Gallery, but Thomas Smith, the first historian of St Marylebone, recorded gloomily that the paintings proved to be copies.

In 1793, John Fordyce, an able and far-sighted man, was appointed Surveyor-General. Knowing that the leases on Marylebone Park would expire on January 24, 1811, he realized that the possession of so large an estate would give the Crown a wonderful opportunity to beautify the capital and increase its revenues. He had copies of his survey engraved and distributed to architects. A competition, with £1000 as prize, was announced for the best design for laying out the Park as a residential area, with a new road connecting it with the West End of London. Such a commission could make an architect's name and fortune, but when Fordyce died in 1809 only three plans had been received, and they were all from the same man, John White.

White, knowing the terrain exceedingly well, recommended that the rough circle of the Park should be laid out with a broad drive, and that that should be surrounded on the west, north and east with some sixty-six villas. To the south he described a crescent, in the centre of which a fine parish church was to stand. Avenues were to cross the Park irregularly from north to south. The scheme was not as masterly as that ultimately produced by Nash—the Grand Crescent was not so original as the superb asymmetry of Nash's Inner and Outer Circles, there was no attempt to link the Park to the rest of London with a new road, nor were there any suggestions for the drainage of the area—but it had style and merit, and would probably have preserved the rural character of the Park, which White had known so long and loved so well.

Entries from a single man do not make a competition, and on October 8, 1810, the architects of the Departments of Land Revenue and Woods were instructed to prepare plans for the development of Marylebone Park. Thomas Leverton and Thomas Chawner represented the





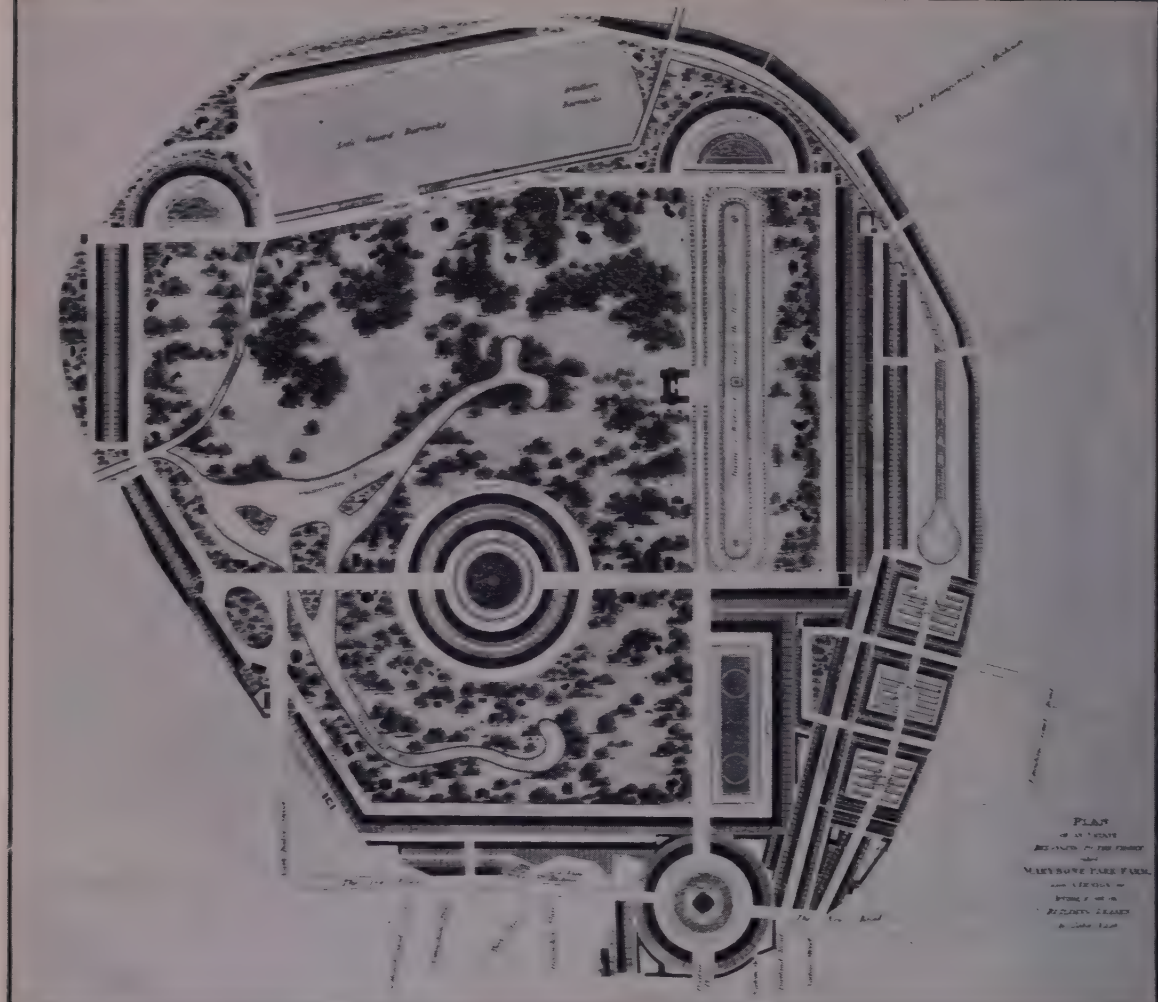
The south part of Marylebone Park in Rocque's map of 1746. Willan's Farm was then Daget's—





—and Marylebone Gardens was a popular resort: but the Portland Estate was developing rapidly





B, courtesy of the St Marylebone Public Libraries Committee

Nash's original plan for the development of Marylebone Park, 1812. The two-winged building facing the long, narrow basin was to have been a private retreat for the Prince Regent; but, like most of the villas, the northern crescents, the church in the circus, it was never built

Department of Land Revenue; John Nash and James Morgan the Department of Woods.

There was no question as to which was the better design. Leverton and Chawner, influenced in part by the developments in Edinburgh and Bath, proposed that the greater part of the Park should be laid out as a continuation of the Portland Estate, with streets and squares, that there should be eleven large and some fifty-four small villas to the north, with a church, two markets to the east and west, and a barracks in accordance with the specification. They estimated that, for an expenditure of £8200, the then rental of £5165 could be increased to £23,000 a year. No

scale was given with the map; and both it and the report attached were frankly dull.

But Nash's plan was exciting and original; even the official report which accompanied it was enthusiastic. He wrote:

The principles on which this Report, and the designs accompanying it are formed, and the objects proposed to be obtained, are, that Marylebone Park shall be made to contribute to the healthfulness, beauty, and advantage, of that quarter of the Metropolis; that the Houses and Buildings to be erected shall be of that useful description, and permanent construction, and possess such local advantages, as shall be likely to assure a great augmentation of Revenue to the



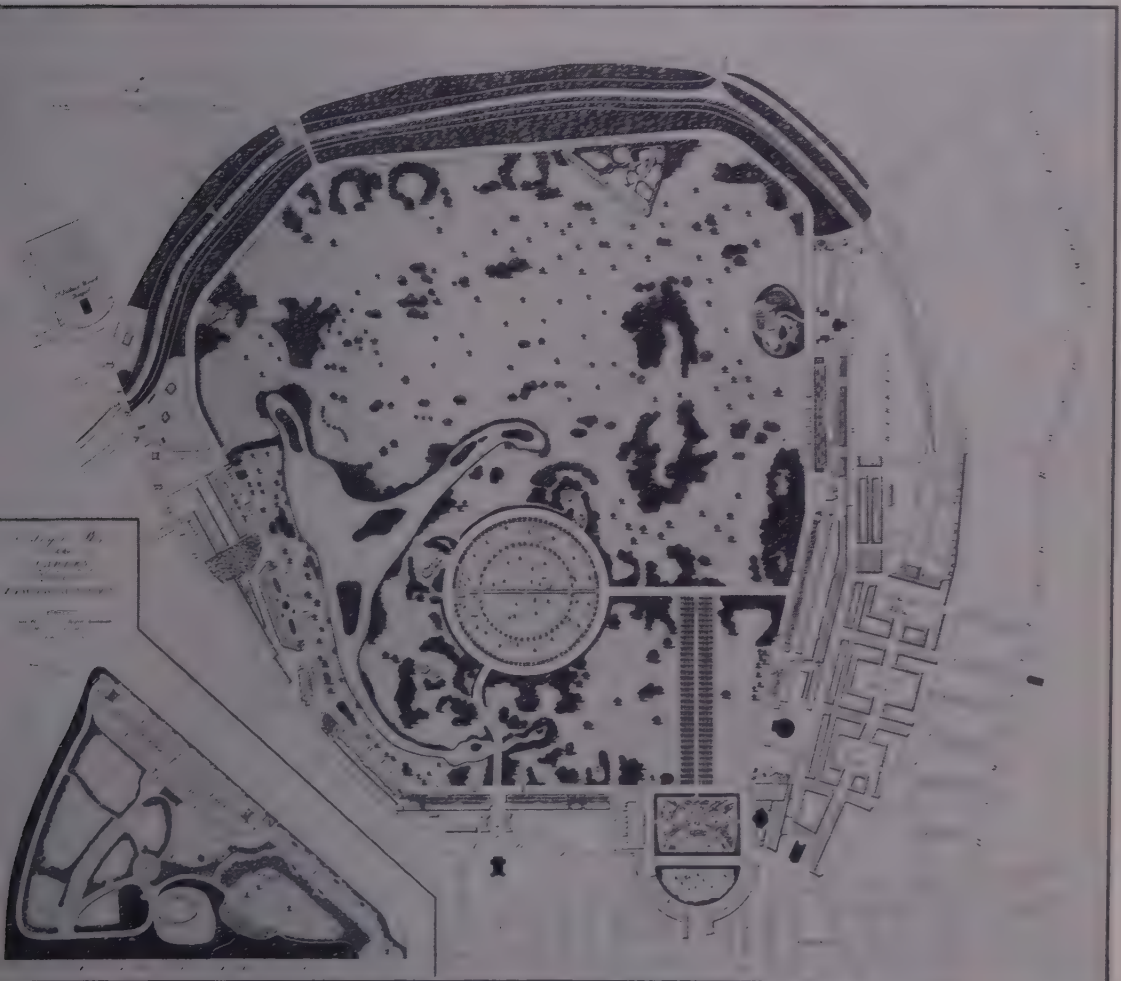
Crown at the expiration of the Leases; that the attraction of open space, free air, and the scenery of nature, with the means and invitation of exercise on horseback, on foot and in Carriages, shall be preserved or created in Mary-le-bone Park, as allurements or motives for the wealthy part of the Public to establish themselves there; and that the advantages which the circumstances of the situation itself present shall be improved and advanced, and that markets, and conveniences essential to the comforts of Life, shall be placed in situations, and under such circumstances, as may induce Tradesmen to settle there.

He calculated that an outlay of £12,115 would bring in rents to the value of £59,429 (this was later reduced to £45,468), and that the capital value of the property would be £187,724. He

proposed that the Park should be encircled with a drive or Outer Circle. with terraces of tall narrow houses. Within this there should be an Inner Circle placed eccentrically, enshrining a memorial to national heroes. Carriage roads should cross the Park from east to west and more than fifty villas should be built, so sited that each one should be concealed from its neighbour. At the end of Portland Place he marked a circus. and within it a church. To the north he placed the barracks, to the east a road to Highgate and Hampstead, and three markets. On the west he planned a triple-branched lake, fed with water from an extension of the Regent's Canal, which was also to effect the removal of sewage, and on

The 1828 plan of Regent's Park, published by Mogg, showing how Nash's design had been put into practice. It also gives details of the newly opened Zoological Gardens. The Colosseum and the Diorama appear in the south-eastern corner, the markets and barracks along the east side

*By courtesy of the St Marylebone Public Libraries Committee*







Kerry Dundas

**Sussex Place, on the west side of the Regent's Park, facing the Lake. It is perhaps the most fantastic of all Nash's terraces, and recalls his design for the Royal Pavilion at Brighton**

the north-west was to be another strip of ornamental water to provide a vista for a small royal palace. This Versailles-within-the-capital was to be linked to London by a new street, The Regent's Street, running from Portland Place through Piccadilly to Carlton House, where the Prince Regent lived in Pall Mall, so creating a royal processional mile and dividing the poor quarter of Soho on the east from Mayfair on the west. The Prince was delighted with the scheme and exclaimed continuously: 'It will quite eclipse Napoleon!'

The design was carried out but not in its entirety. Changes in public policy, disagreements amongst colleagues and lack of money robbed it of the unity and cohesion that Nash planned. Almost immediately the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Spencer Percival, decided that fewer villas should be built, and the number was reduced, against the wishes of Nash, to twenty-six. Park Circus became Park Crescent, without its church, and York Gate was enlarged to give

a vista onto the new parish church, designed by Hardwick and built at the expense of the Marylebone Vestry. The Inner Circle was deprived of its National Valhalla, the palace was never built and the carriage roads across the Park were not laid out. Then, when the Prince became King George IV, Carlton House was pulled down and the royal residence transferred to Buckingham House. Only the skeleton of the plan remained, with the lines of the Inner and Outer Circles and Regent Street intact, the terraces and lake as they were first planned, and, finally, eight villas standing in their own grounds in the Park. They were Albany Cottage, the Doric Villa, Grove House, Hanover Lodge, Hertford House, The Holme, St John's Lodge and South Villa.

Great progress was made in carrying out the modified scheme. Elmes, in his *Metropolitan Improvements* (1827), speaks of changes 'which have metamorphosed Mary-le-bone park farm and its cowsheds into a rural city of almost eastern magnificence'. The trees were planted



The west portico of Nuffield Lodge, formerly Grove House, built by Decimus Burton in 1823 for George Bellas Greenough, M.P., an early member of the Zoological Society. From 1909 to 1939 it was the home of the sculptor Sigismund Goetze, who gave the gates to Queen Mary's Garden

*Kerry Dunda*







An aerial view of the Regent's Park, looking south-west: the Inner Circle and the southernmost arm of the Lake can be seen. Inside the Circle is Queen Mary's Rose Garden; the buildings just outside it are those of Bedford College. From left to right, York Terrace, Cornwall Terrace, Clarence Terrace and Sussex Place are visible



before anything else, so that building operations were screened and by the time the terrace and villas were inhabited the avenues had had several years of established growth.

Nash thought of his Park as a companion to Hyde Park; it was to make possible the English gentleman's dream—a country house within easy reach of London. Naturally the villas were expensive: they became homes for the aristocracy, for wealthy merchants, successful architects, artists, writers and musicians. Not all were designed by Nash. The architect of Albany Cottage—or North Villa, as it was sometimes called—is unknown. Its first resident was Thomas Raikes, the diarist and friend of Beau Brummell, whom he helped when in exile. It is now the Islamic Cultural Centre. Grove House, Hertford House and The Holme were the work of Decimus Burton, Nash's pupil. Grove House, in a state of excellent repair, has become Nuffield Lodge, the headquarters of the Nuffield Foundation and other affiliated bodies. Hertford House became in 1915 St Dunstan's Home for the Blind; just before the war it was rebuilt as Winfield House by the Woolworth heiress, Barbara Hutton, who later gave it to be the residence of the American Ambassador. Its garden, incidentally, is the largest in central London after that of Buckingham Palace. The Holme, built by Decimus Burton for his father, James, is now a hostel for students of Bedford College, which has also taken over Hanover Lodge and St John's Lodge, while the main body of the College was built on the site of South Villa.

The Inner Circle was left empty for a few years, but early in the 1830s it was cultivated by a nursery gardener. In 1839 the Royal Botanic Society took over the ground and held its annual flower shows there till the Society ceased to exist in 1932. Within the Inner Circle a rose garden was laid out between the wars and called Queen Mary's Garden.

Three interesting institutions found premises in the Regent's Park. One of them, the Zoological Society, is still there: this was founded in 1827 by a group of enthusiastic gentlemen headed by Sir Stamford Raffles, who unfortunately died before he could see his schemes carried out. The other two, now gone, were the Colosseum and the Diorama; both were places for public entertainment.

The Colosseum was built in the late 1820s by Decimus Burton. It was a magnificent sixteen-

sided polygon, 130 feet in diameter. It had a cupola and a splendid Grecian portico. It was the property of a Mr Horner, a topographical artist who, in 1821, when the ball and cross of St Paul's were being repaired, ascended the scaffolding and, as Elmes tells us, drew a panorama of London covering 1680 square feet of paper. Over the next five or six years he and a team of artists painted detailed views from the sketches, and the whole was at last opened to the admiration of the public in 1827, the entrance fee being five shillings. Other attractions were added, and the sum was reduced to a shilling for the panorama and a shilling for the rest of the building. The Colosseum received excellent, if unexpected, advertisement on opening, for Goldsworthy Gurney elected, on December 6, 1827, to drive his steam car, the first vehicle of its kind, up and down Albany Street, in front of the building.

Several large fashion plates, issued by the enterprising firm of B. Read of Bloomsbury in the late 1830s, take the Colosseum as their setting, and it was certainly a fashionable and popular excursion in its early days. Unfortunately, Mr Horner's enterprise did not pay. It closed, was re-opened in 1844, refurbished in 1849, auctioned in 1855 and finally demolished in 1876.

The Diorama was, if possible, even more ingenious. Its façade was designed by Nash, but its interior was the work of Messrs Morgan and Pugin. The Diorama itself was the invention of Bouton and Daguerre. Scenes of Switzerland, of Normandy, of Mount Etna, of Venice and the Rhine were painted on sheets of glass, and given a three-dimensional effect with mirrors and lights. The seated audience were slowly moved round on a hidden turntable and were able to enjoy a spectacle both astonishing and educational. But the Diorama did not pay either for very long, and by 1855 the building was taken over and converted into the Regent's Park Baptist College.

I would like to end by quoting the remark of a visitor who admired Nash's architecture. Crabb Robinson, the diarist, driving round Regent's Park in a gig, said of the scene: 'I really think this enclosure, with the new street leading to it from Carlton House, will give a sort of glory to the Regent's Government, which will be more felt by remote posterity than the victories of Trafalgar and Waterloo, glorious as they are.' Succeeding generations have agreed with him.

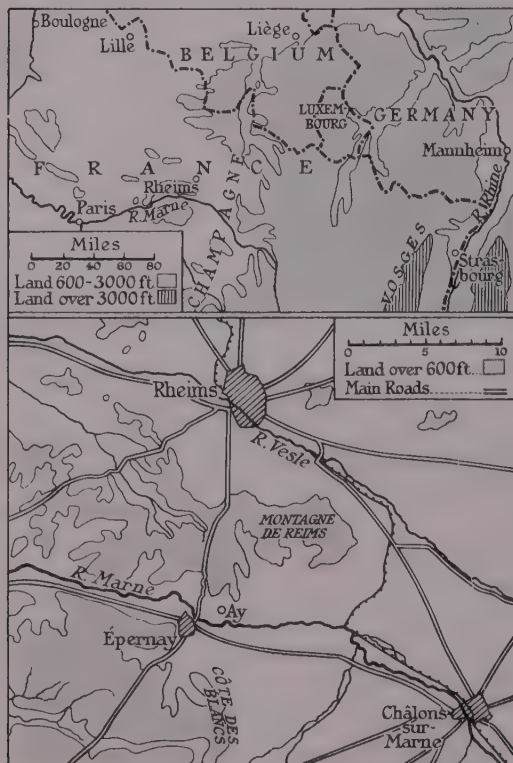


# New Ways in the Champagne World

by PETER BRINSON

FROM September till the spring the champagne of the autumn harvest sleeps without sparkle in casks below Rheims and Épernay. It is quite still. In February or March it is blended and bottled. Captured in the bottle, it wakens with spring and ferments. It sparkles and will go on sparkling till we drink it, five years later.

The grapes which create this wonder grow in thirty thousand strictly defined acres in an area twenty-odd miles around Rheims and Épernay. These acres are divided between 10,000 owners, called *vignerons*. Some of them, like the houses of Moët & Chandon, Mumm and Krug, own considerable portions of the land, but the average size of a holding is only an acre and a half. Many houses own no vineyards at all, buying their grapes each year from peasant *vignerons*.



A. J. Thornton

The vineyards, among the most northerly in Europe, lie along both sides of the Marne in three distinct regions: the Montagne de Reims, forming the southern side of the Vesle valley and facing north; the Marne valley itself, round Épernay and Ay; and the Côte des Blancs, a long hillside south-east of Épernay facing east, so called because the grapes it grows are white and particularly precious.

No genius is needed to understand how vineyards on the slopes of these tree-covered hills acquire their personality from the combination of climate and geography which makes champagne what it is. Lying about ninety miles east of Paris, the climate resembles that of the French capital, generally mild in winter, variable in spring, hot in summer and calm and fine in autumn. Yet the neighbouring Vosges mountains can turn this mildness into weather too extreme, one might think, for vines.

To compensate, the black and white Pinot vines (the Pinot Meunier and the Chardonnay white-grape vine) have adapted themselves to their conditions. Sturdy but less productive than vines in other regions, they form their fruit earlier and ripen more slowly over a longer period, the high sugar content of their juice yielding as much as twelve degrees of alcohol.

The hills upon which they grow shelter them from the north wind, raise them above the plains where frost is specially dangerous, and dispose them at such an angle to the sun that the chalk soil reflects its rays and gives out the maximum of heat and light. Forests near by help to regulate moisture in the air and soil, while from the soil itself—chalky and gravelly, with lime and calcium—the wine draws much of its quality. Soil, location and cultivation, in that order, determine the quality of a vineyard and its wine.

In late September or early October the gathered grapes are brought in baskets from the vineyards to the presses. It is a time of high excitement, especially when the harvest is a record for quantity and quality, as it was in 1959. Even a rather wet harvest, like that of 1960, does not lose this excitement, which seems to flow as





*All photographs by Don Long (Cinematography) Ltd*

**The village of Verzenay and the Montagne de Reims. This is typical champagne country. Black-grape vineyards can be seen in the foreground, and in the distance lies the Plain of Châlons**

much from tradition as from full baskets, pound on pound and ton on ton of grapes, filling the air of every village with pungent smells.

Try to see a wine harvest. Pass through Champagne at the right moment (any champagne house will tell you when) and you will sense this contact with the past. The carriage of the baskets, the bent figures at the vines are what Homer described, and Tacitus too and the reverend fathers of the mediaeval church.

The grapes are weighed and emptied into huge presses holding four tons at a time. Without crushing pips or stalks or extracting the colour from the skins the juice is squeezed from the grapes in successive presses to run into vats whence it flows into casks. Four tons usually give 572 gallons of juice, corresponding to thirteen casks holding forty-four gallons each. Of these only the first ten casks, obtained by two or three rapid turns of the screw of the wine press, will go to make the really superior wines. The remaining three casks may also by law be called champagne, but any juice besides (and there is usually quite a lot) must be sold as ordinary wine without any appellation.

The wine so produced from all the vineyards amounts to about 40,000,000 bottles of champagne a year, distributed by about 150 champagne firms, or houses. The industry therefore is small, even if it is world famous.

Who drinks champagne? First, the French themselves, who drink something like 27,500,000 bottles annually. Then the British, drinking 3,200,000; the North Americans 2,500,000; the Belgians 1,400,000; the Italians 600,000; and the rest of the world 4,800,000. There is room, then, for sales to expand, especially in the Middle East, Asia, North and South America and Africa, notwithstanding customs barriers.

The biggest barrier, in fact, is the conservative nature of the champagne industry itself. Generally it has been slow to mechanize, slow to use modern sales methods, and slow to reach beyond the classes who have traditionally drunk champagne, to the rising classes and younger age groups of the world's welfare states, in the old countries as well as the new ones. The traditional British markets, for example, could be much expanded if the major houses turned their attention to these new consumers, reaching them



Families from industrial districts come for a paid holiday at harvest-time. They are formed into *équipes*, groups which have their pickers, carriers and a tally-man to keep the record

through modern information methods which could break down snob association and kill the idea, created by hotels and restaurants, that champagne is more expensive than it really is. A simple investigation in the *Sunday Times* recently showed that a champagne party for thirty people, using non-vintage champagne at 25s. a bottle, was cheaper than the more usual whisky-and-gin party for a similar number of people. This news caused astonishment in London, Rheims and Épernay; but it could have been discovered by the wine trade years ago.

Among world-famous houses of champagne like Pol-Roger, Veuve Clicquot, Mumm, Krug, Heidsieck and so on, only one has really developed modern methods in a big way. This is the house of Moët & Chandon, the largest of them all and therefore the one most easily able to afford mechanization. Its hydraulic presses, pressing 240 tons of grapes an hour, day and night, during harvest, its methods of transferring this great volume of wine to vats and casks, its testing and laboratory devices, are all unique. In terms of labour these methods have reduced the number of workers employed in key production departments from 150 to 24, of whom 12 are apprentices. In economic terms new

methods have helped to push sales to around 6,000,000 bottles a year, almost a sixth of all champagne sold, and so far ahead of any other house that Moët's price policy largely determines the price policy of the industry.

This way, it seems, lies the future, so that smaller houses may have to combine to effect a similar modernization if they are not to go out of business.

Moët's methods, largely born in the fertile mind of Count Robert-Jean de Vogüé, head of the firm, do not depart essentially from the traditional methods of making champagne which were developed in the second half of the 17th century by Dom Pérignon, cellarer of the local monastery of Hautvillers.

To understand these traditional methods we must glance again at the new champagne lying in its forty-four-gallon casks in cellars below Épernay, labelled according to the growth from which it came.

It ferments in the casks until the onset of winter stops the fermentation. Then the cellars are opened so that the cold will cause a precipitation which throws the impurities to the bottom and allows the clear wine to be drawn off.

Up to this point the manipulation of the wine



is much the same as in other wine-growing districts. Now comes the difference. When the wine is drawn off it is blended, one growth with another, in enormous vats which are characteristic of champagne cellars.

Champagne is the only great wine so blended. The idea of the blend was developed by Dom Pérignon, who also introduced the cork as we know it, so that the natural carbonic gas cannot escape and bubbles can form. Nothing new has been invented in this field since his experiments clarified the wines, explained the reason for the sparkle and put the gas to work. All the scientific researches of the industry since then have only rationalized the principles he evolved.

The blending, or *cuvée*, therefore, is almost as important as the harvest itself. The heads of each firm and their *chefs de cave* have to be experienced tasters, knowing what the new wine from each growth will be like when it is old and what it will become when it is married with the wines of other growths.

Unlike the blending of wines elsewhere, which is usually done to mask deficiencies at the price of the wine's personality, the blending of champagne is done to assemble the best qualities of several wines into one wine better than any of

its parts. How this is done is the secret of each house, accounting for different champagnes and for the success of some over others. No amount of mechanization will help at this stage. The wines and the judgement must be good from the beginning.

Since so much depends on human skill and experience, the Count de Vogüé adopted new methods of labour management alongside the rationalization of production. The reduction of the labour force, consequent on mechanization, was done with the help of the trade unions concerned. The force totalled 1700 in 1946 and now numbers only 730. Sixty per cent of it normally votes Communist, so it is no small achievement to have carried out the change in this way. Certainly it surprised and shocked a great part of the conservative champagne industry.

The industry was no less shocked by the introduction of the forty-hour week for the first time anywhere in the French wine trade, an incentive bonus scheme run with workers' committees, and a workers' accountant to examine the firm's books. The policy has been a success and appears to solve a principal problem of the French wine trade: how to retain traditional virtues of care and craftsmanship while using

Along the roads and lanes of Champagne, carts bring in the baskets of grapes for the pressing





Before and after. Giant hydraulic presses, holding four tons of grapes at a time, are cleaned (above) in the Moët & Chandon *pressoir* between pressings. Old wine and cane sugar are added (below) to the mature wine five years later, after sediment has been removed by *dégorgement*







A final check. The wine, now ready for drinking, is examined in a strong light before being labelled. Before mechanization at Moët & Chandon this process occupied several men full time

the advantages of science, engineering and business efficiency.

The product of so much effort lies spread through many miles of chalk cellars below Rheims and Épernay in millions of bottles racked from floor to ceiling at a constant temperature of 10 degrees centigrade. Soon the 1960 wine will swell the number, fermenting in the bottle, blended in the traditional way of each great house.

The fermentation, however, throws a deposit. So the bottles are placed neck downwards on inclined racks where highly skilled workers turn them every day for several months to work the sediment onto the cork. This is the *remuage*. When it has been done the bottles are binned upside down *en masse* to mature.

When the moment comes to leave the cellars, the neck of the bottle is quickly frozen, the cork removed, the ice pellet containing the sediment expelled and the bottle recorked after cane sugar and older wine have been added to make up what is lost. The amount of sugar depends on the market. The French like their champagne light and sparkling; the English dry; the Scandinavians sweet.

These bottles, waiting in their cellar, remind me of Beau Nash's ladies at the Bath Assemblies. There are those in the bloom of youth and 'elder ladies and children . . . past or not come to perfection'. Few last beyond perfection. Champagne is at its best between five and ten years after bottling. Today we drink it young, in its fifth or sixth year, and we drink it all.

Of course, some ladies of noble and ancient vintage survive for interest to honour special visitors. Mr Khrushchev, when he visited the Moët cellars in March 1960, was offered a vintage 1893 bottled in April 1894, the month and year of his birth, and was saluted on departure with a salvo of one hundred magnums opened at a given signal. In just such a way, from cellars lit with similar sconces of candles, did Alexander I, Tsar of Russia, depart after his visit on July 9, 1815.

I tasted the 1893 and tasted, too, last September, an 1898 which became the coronation vintage of Edward VII. Both old ladies were still active and rather sweet, such as would suit the end of a meal, not the beginning. Yet there was tragedy in the sweetness. So old were they, they faded as we drank. The sparkle vanished. The taste went bitter. In half an hour they were dead.

# The City of Sofia

by A. L. LLOYD

To those who expect a Balkan city to look like the decor for a spy-thriller, Sofia is a disappointment. It is remarkably short of furtive alleys and shrouded figures. Instead, it is a clean, candid, rather Austrian-looking little metropolis, and even in the glamour of its coloured floodlights it is clearly more of a place for night-schools than night-clubs. There is not much that is old and weathered in Sofia. A century ago it was a little Turkish town with thirty-two mosques and twenty thousand people. Then the Turks went, pursued by the thunder of Russian guns and, more remotely, by the boom of Gladstone's voice across Blackheath. A Battenberg was appointed to rule Bulgaria and the renovation of Sofia in European style began. The chosen manner was that of the German provinces, with relatively small yellow-washed buildings whose amiable glow was added to, in the city centre, by yellow glazed-brick roadways. The glazed bricks were an expensive importation from Germany, and soldiers below commissioned rank were forbidden to walk on them in their hob-nailed boots, except in emergency occasioned by a casual bomb-throwing or some such evidence of public unease. Nowadays, with the population rapidly growing towards three-quarters of a million, the genial yellow three-deckers of the immediate past are fighting a losing battle against enormous structures, some

looking depressingly like the new Shell building on the Thames at Waterloo.

And what of the human beings in these very European streets? Their image is more varied, more exotic. Of people of the Sofia region, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says they are 'despised by the other inhabitants of Bulgaria for their bestiality and stupidity, but dreaded for their savagery. They are a singularly repellent race, short-legged, yellow-skinned, with slanting eyes and projecting cheekbones.' The visitor to Sofia finds it hard to reconcile this stern and liverish view with what he sees for himself. In the Georgi Dimitrov Boulevard, eyes seem as round and legs as long as in Regent Street, nor are motions of the heart and intellect less in evidence. In any case, generalization is impossible, for the human image of Sofia is multiple. It is the building-labourer turned ballet-dancer; it is the smooth young State-planner in a well-cut suit (the padded shoulders and Oxford bags of Moscow are a bit of a joke in Sofia); it is the arm-in-arm group of peasant girls, new arrivals in the mushroom industrial suburb of Nadezhda, who wear under their Co-op cardigans the embroideries of their native village; it is the Korean typist who came here as a child among train-loads of war orphans, ten years or so ago; it is the trousered women wheeling their prams in Liberation Park, Muslims from the gypsy district that straddles the Stambulisky Boulevard; it is the sharp-faced musician with an almost guilty interest in Webern; it is the numerous Arab, Negro and Chinese students in the streets round the university (Bulgarians are rather Scottish in their respect for education, and like to draw the foreigner's attention to the fact that at institutes of higher learning they have fifty-five students per 10,000 inhabitants; the comparative figure for Britain—they say—is seventeen).

The day starts early in Sofia, and by half past six in the morning the streets are thronged with people walking to work or waiting for the bright little trams. Many will have had a quick breakfast of bread-and-butter and white sheep's-milk cheese, but these days it is becoming more and

**Sofia is changing fast; round the old Turkish mosque, modern Europe asserts itself more vehemently every day**



A. J. Thornton









To Constantine the Great, Sofia was 'my Rome'. To the Turks it was a 'little Istanbul'. Now it is becoming a European capital. (Opposite, top) The view from Lenin Square down Georgi Dimitrov Boulevard. On the right is the new super-department-store called Tsum, with car sales on the ground floor and carpets at the top. (Opposite, bottom) Sofia is one of the cleanest cities in Europe. Late evening and early morning, a characteristic sight is gangs of street-cleaners hosing down the handsome glazed-brick roadways. (Below) Hunting and fishing are favoured week-end pastimes for the citizens of Sofia. Fish-bait stalls do a busy trade with those planning a trip to the Isker River or Stalin Dam Lake for trout





The National Theatre, built in 1904, is the most venerable of Sofia's many theatres. Its repertory ranges from Shakespeare to Brecht. People in Sofia are devoted theatre-goers, and often the only way to get a ticket is through a trade-union block-booking



more usual to drop in at one of the little early-morning cafeterias on the way to work for a quarter-kilo cup of ice-cold yoghurt and a steaming hot *banitsa*—pastry with cheese.

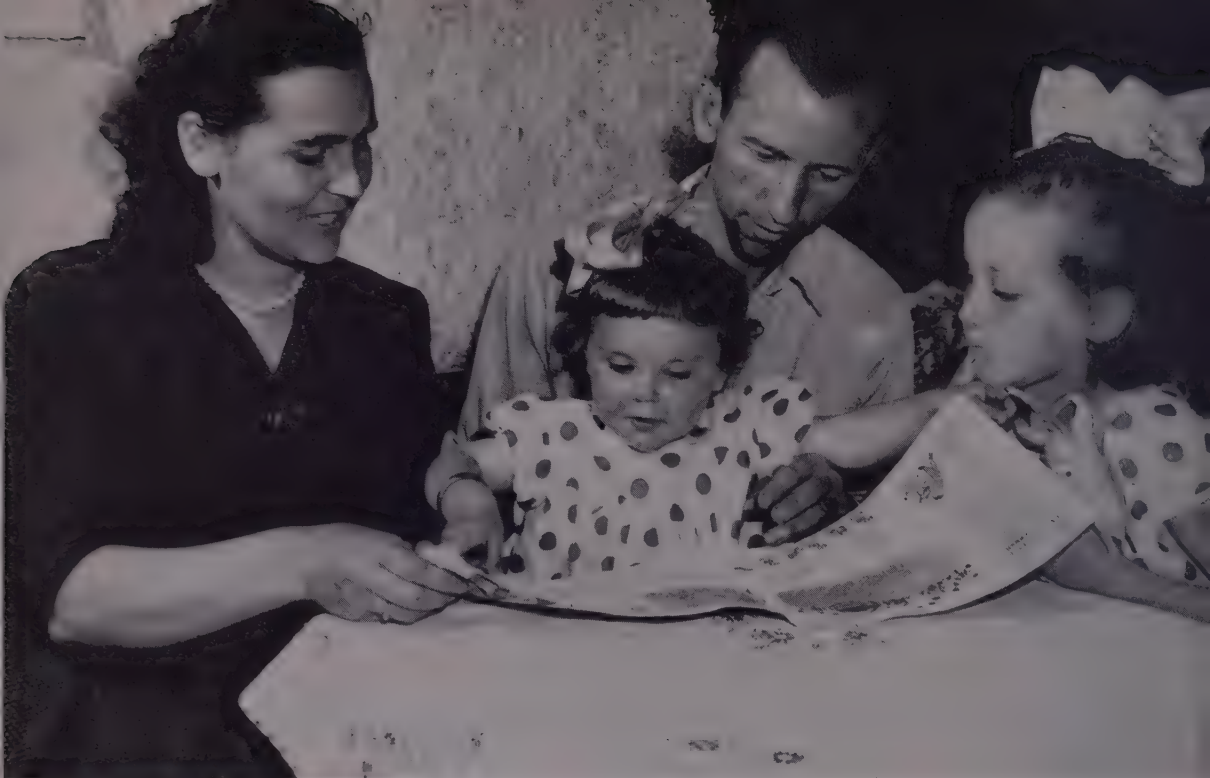
The strolling foreigner with nothing better to do may follow a pretty girl to her work-place, which may well turn out to be one of the city's many impressive bookshops. Left to moon at the windows, the visitor is faced with a colossal array of technical books, mainly of Russian origin. Most of the modern foreign authors represented are Communists or fellow-travellers (it is possible to find Brecht, Eluard or Pablo Neruda even in a suburban newsagent's), but on the English shelf are translations of Graham Greene, John Braine, also Galsworthy who for some reason retains his grip on the Balkan imagination. The shop is likely to do a great deal of business in foreign-language textbooks. Even

in pre-war times, Bulgarian interest in foreign languages was remarkable, and nowadays it has reached a pitch where the women in theatre cloakrooms can hardly bother to take your coat because they are so deep in their English grammar-books. Knowledge of Russian is almost an obligatory item in the citizen's cultural baggage. This is nothing new, and comes partly from the general esteem that Russia has been held in since the 1870s, when the troops of the Tsar Liberator Alexander I broke the Ottoman yoke with the help of Bulgarian partisans. Partly, too, the wish to learn Russian goes hand in hand with the enormous importation of scientific and technical books from the U.S.S.R. Children begin learning Russian almost as soon as they start school. But at nine or so they commence with another foreign language which these days is likely to be English rather than French or German.

Sofia is building furiously to house her rapidly swelling population. New domestic building consists almost entirely of apartment blocks. The Zaimov Complex (shown here) comprises 350 flats, shops, restaurant, courts for tennis and basketball, and a puppet theatre seating 220

Ted Falcon-Barker





All remaining photographs by courtesy of the Legation of The People's Republic of Bulgaria

Everyone reads in Sofia and bookshops abound; even so, they occasionally feel like holding a book fair (*below*) to display yet more books to feed their voracious minds. As their capital is transformed into a modern city, electricity is needed (*opposite*) in increasing quantities







Sobered by so many evidences of high purpose, the visitor turns from the shop window, and resumes his stroll. During the morning, Sofia is a quiet city. No street cries are heard. Hooting is forbidden. The most noticeable sound is of the policeman's whistle at the street-crossings. Traffic in Sofia is absurdly light for a European capital, but the rules about crossing the main roads are nevertheless strict. All day long, a battle of wills is waged between traffic police and peasants in town for the day, who delight in cheating the law by crossing in the most daring places.

Nobody seems in much hurry, and though the Bulgarian has the reputation of being the busiest fellow in the Balkans, in fact his sense of time is still fairly Oriental. In winter, passers-by like to dawdle outside the former Roman baths beside the central mosque, and to drink the hot sweet mineral water from mock-ancient bronze cups. Bulgarians are inordinately proud of their country's associations with classical antiquity. 'The film *Spartacus*? You know, Spartacus was a countryman of ours, from Thrace.' 'Gluck's *Orpheus*? You know, Orpheus was a countryman of ours, from the Rhodopes.' Total strangers will boast to the foreigner how Trajan was so impressed with Sofia that he gave it his family name of Ulpia. Constantine, they say, thought of making it the capital of his empire, instead of Rome. Fifteen hundred years ago, the ruined city was daubed with the slogan 'Attila was here', but a century later it re-emerged as an important Byzantine centre. Then darkness set in, and for five hundred years Sofia dwindled in Turkish hands till, following the liberation of 1876, it began its transformation into a modern city. Well, relatively modern. Sofia was still very much a peasant capital when the Communists effectively took over after September 9, 1944. And for all the rebuilding—R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. air-raids destroyed more than 12,500 homes as well as many offices and factories—and for all the expansion to new districts and settlements—one of which is named Buxton, after Noel-Buxton, an energetic campaigner for Bulgaria's rights—Sofia still finds it hard to put on an urbane face. Thus the food-shops, for instance, make desperate efforts to look attractive, with delicatessen arranged in the form of gigantic flowers, and the fruit departments all Mexican with bamboo and cacti and handsome baskets, and this in the hope, so far vain, of seducing people away from the open market run by peasants from the countryside.

But, themselves peasant-like, the citizens of Sofia love the din of the market; they like to be able to argue with the stallholders; also the open market is cheaper, and housewives who do their shopping by the Vladai River are every bit as hardheaded as their sisters in the Rue Mouffetard or the Birmingham Bull Ring.

The foreigner remarks on the great number of grandmothers shopping in the market. Grandmothers are a powerful institution in the life of the city, and every other household seems to have one to act as housekeeper, keep the budget, look after the children when they come home from school (normal school hours: 8 a.m. till 1 p.m.) and to cook the evening meal ready for the rest of the family when they return from work.

Though in a small city like Sofia a high proportion of workers are employed within walking distance of home, they rarely go home to lunch, preferring to eat in whichever canteen their enterprise issues cheap tickets for. This despite the fact that in many cases the lunch-break is long, most shops, for instance, shutting down from 12.30 till 4 in the afternoon, a frequent source of bafflement to the visitor from 'Europe' (Bulgarians don't seem to get used to being part of the Continent, and even educated ones will ask the Western foreigner: 'How are things in Europe?').

Food is a matter of enormous importance to Bulgarians, who are astonished at the relatively puny British appetite, and sometimes tend to see this as another manifest of decadence. The cuisine is mainly Turkish, *kebabcheta* (grilled meat on a skewer), *kyofiteta* (fried meat balls), and the delicious *gyuvech* stew that children take to the baker's early in the morning, to cook slowly in the big oven. Vast quantities of meat are eaten, mostly pork and lamb, but real lamb, and of an evening after 6 when the shops and offices have closed and the workers are on their way home, the back streets of Sofia smell rather like those of Buenos Aires, with the fine bouquet of grilling meat rising from the charcoal braziers that, in summer at least, are set on the balconies.

As a rule, the casual visitor sees little of Sofia's domestic life beyond those balconies. Some say that people are nervous of inviting Westerners into their homes for fear of seeming too intimate with them; some say that living in Sofia is generally so overcrowded that a visitor may be an embarrassment; others recall that over much of Europe, in fact, the long-established convention is to meet your friends out in public somewhere rather than to invite them





The intensity of Bulgarian-Yugoslav football matches is a guide to current political attitudes

home. So in the evening the foreigner may sit in, say, the 'Bulgaria' bar-restaurant, wondering why the jazz is so awful when the local peasant music is rhythmically more exciting and farther out than any dreamed of by Brubeck or Ornette Coleman. He may smile indulgently at the local equivalent of our Teds, snapping their fingers like hep-cats to music that is squarer than Victor Silvester's (Sofia has her drifting teenagers, but they are nothing like the problem the *stilyagi* are in Moscow). He may be approached by eager youngsters from the English faculty, married already (early marriage is all the rage in Sofia), who do not want to discuss Western literature or 'conditions', but are full of unanswerable enquiries about English motor-bikes. Then the youngsters go off to their night-school course on the history of the class-struggle, or to

the old National Theatre to see the Gorky play, and the foreigner drifts out into the night, past the floodlit mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov, past the poster advertising a lecture on Henry Fielding (of all people), past the tenement yard in which a furious game of volleyball, boys versus girls, is going on under arc-lights, past the vaguely reassuring sight of a policeman kissing a policewoman in a dim side-turning, towards the international anonymity of the vast Balkan Hotel, where amid the overblown stateliness that is felt to be suitable for visiting foreigners and out-of-town delegates to conferences on dairy-production, he may reflect on the candours and reticences of a city of ancient traditions, invaded and transformed by the earnestness of youth, a far, far stranger place than would seem on the surface.

# Tibetan Herdsmen in China

by NIGEL CAMERON

Mr Cameron's latest book, about his travels in the Far East, is "To the East a Phoenix", which Hutchinsons published last September

IN an age of jet-hops from one side of the globe to the other, the two days spent in travelling by train from Peking to Lanchow in Kansu Province of China lend a comforting intimacy to a journey which by swifter means would be just another impersonal trip; and it comes as a surprise to realize, after such a long journey, that Lanchow lies not at the western extremity of China but almost in its geographical centre: it is on the desert margin and there are another 1600 miles of China before the Russian border.

Lanchow is the Chinese version of the boom town. Formerly it was the western terminus of the railway, but in the last few years since rich deposits of oil and minerals have been exploited in the Tsaidam and Sinkiang regions the track has probed out into the deserts for hundreds of miles. Now, more than ever before, Lanchow is the collecting centre for the products of this vast new-rich country and its staggering influx of workers and technicians. Once a charming, dilapidated place of 200,000 inhabitants lying at the western end of an elliptical plain on the banks of the upper Yellow River, it has become a great industrial city of about a million people. A boom town, but, in the modern Chinese manner, the boom is wholly industrial and not speculative.

Embedded in the growth of new buildings on the outskirts, there are still plenty of little dark shops selling incense or exotic skins of snow leopard, bear, chinchilla. Others are filled with the favourite headgear of Mongolian, Tibetan and other minority people's taste, and with the bizarre silver jewellery they like to wear. And, sign of changing times, the kerosene pressure-lamp, the rubber tyre for an old cartwheel, have their prominent place amongst more local merchandise.

The swift current of the Yellow River at Lanchow is still best crossed on a raft made of inflated goatskins; and the sole bridge is that built by American engineers in the early years of the century, although a plaque recounts that its structure has been strengthened by Chinese.

Overlooking the sprawl of factories and the

huge new oil refinery, a delicate pagoda on the brow of a hill is a reminder of former days. In a park I found school-children collecting roots and herbs to sell to a Chinese medicine shop whose pharmacopoeia normally includes such medicaments as essences of snake-skin and ground tortoise-shell.

Though the railway has stretched out beyond Lanchow and new roads start off in several directions, you do not have to drive far from the city to feel you are a very long way from the comforts and safety of civilization. Westward there is a road following the Yellow River for some miles, and then going along with one of its tributaries. Driving down it I was more conscious of progression into the past than of miles ticked off on my way. On the banks of the river are huge wooden water-wheels, many of them fifty or sixty feet in diameter, revolving lazily. They creak and groan, but with a dogged mediaeval efficiency they carry up the troughs of water which spill into runnels at the top. The fields are full of water-melons in whose pink juicy depths I had seen many small boys and girls in Lanchow eagerly munching. And there are miles of bright yellow rape-seed traversed by elegant rows of silvery poplars, backed by a magnificent cyclorama of lilac-striped rocky mountains and a fine blue sky.

By the time the road reaches Yung Teng—a large village 100 miles north-west of the city—almost all vestiges of the present century have disappeared. Villages are surrounded by high mud walls and most of their houses are of the same warm yellow substance. The roadway is alive with peasants carrying produce, and farming implements which went out of date in Europe several hundred years ago; donkey carts loaded with mud and straw for bricks, children with loads of brushwood, grandmothers riding small Chinese horses—all cluttering the road. The dust kicked up by hooves and feet and wheels rises

**A thermolitic cracker being erected for the first oil refinery at Lanchow, in the middle of China. When the author was there, horses were commoner than lorries**





like wood-smoke in the wake of every moving thing; for this part of Kansu lies at the western extremity of the triangle of yellow earth (or loess) which broadens like a fan over the north China plain towards the distant Yellow Sea.

Beyond Yung Teng the river is left on one side, running rather thinly in summer on its bed of blue pebbles. The fertile loess irrigated by its water gives place to grazing-land covered with dry tussocks of grass and swept by a wind which I suddenly realized had a keen edge to it. Sheep, goats and, finally, great clumsy yaks with fleece blowing, appear in fields. The peasants are all wearing padded clothes despite the hot summer sun. Standing a few minutes in the shade talking to some of them I understood the reason; for we had been slowly climbing all day and the difference between sun and shade temperatures must have been about forty degrees. Long before we reached An Yang, our destination, a range of 12,000-foot mountains grew out of the northern

horizon, white and unreal against the sky.

An Yang is the administrative hub of the Tibetan Autonomous County called Tien Chu, one of many such small groupings of minority races within the confines of China. It is really a village, its greatness having been thrust upon it like a stone façade on a mud hut. The original An Yang lies down the end of the single street which has been elongated. The one provision shop of old times has turned into a small department store and a few smaller shops have appeared here and there. The people are mostly peasants—Tibetans, Mongols, and the Hui nationals who are Chinese Muslims. But the advent of local government and of a teachers' training college has added a leavening of intellectuals, not the least surprising of the recent changes.

There is no hotel in An Yang and I was given the room of an official, who kindly vacated it for me, in the mud compound of Government

**On the bank of the Yellow River at Lanchow. A small goatskin raft with its passengers aboard is about to be shoved off by the boatman. The river is low in summer, but dangerously swift**







*All colour reproductions are from Kodachromes*

Children fishing for tadpoles in a park in Lanchow, a town which is growing rapidly. The red neckerchiefs worn by some of them show that they are 'Young Pioneers', a sort of Boy Scouts movement







*(Opposite)* Wayside stalls in Lanchow sell tea and soft drinks.  
*(Above)* The road from Lanchow to An Yang is lined with Chinese poplars. Two-wheeled donkey carts are used a lot in these parts. The yellow in the background is a field of rape-seed in flower



**A Tibetan herdsman riding a small Chinese horse returns to the Cooperative from Hegetah's pastures near the Ma-Lingshan range**



Headquarters. Its floor was pounded mud and its furniture sketchy, but the bed was piled with numbers of quilted covers of embroidered sherbet-pink satin, much beloved by the Chinese.

To the surprise of my hosts—for they always expect to coddle foreigners in China—I set out immediately down the village street and encountered a crocodile of children in blue padded suits and red neckerchiefs, sturdy ruddy-faced kids with hands chapped from the bitter winds. One boy carried a flute and I asked him to play for me. His friends nudged him saying: ‘Go on! Play for the foreigner.’ And at last he overcame his shyness and played a haunting Tibetan tune for me as I stood in the mob of slant-eyed youngsters completely blocking the street. I heard its counterpart on the following day.

The next morning I set off in a Land-Rover and drove straight into the open country towards the white-toothed range of mountains glittering on the northern horizon. It was a tremendous landscape, dotted occasionally with a single figure on horseback crossing the great sweep of the grazing-land like a courier of Genghiz Khan. The wind whistled past your ears and froze your fingers.

There are some days apparently destined for remembrance. They come unheralded, as did this one, which I spent with the herdsmen of the Tibetan Cooperative at Hegetah. Forging an icy stream we saw in the distance a fur-hatted figure with earflaps flying, who waved us on. A few yaks were grazing here and there, pausing to fix us with their blank eyes. A couple of them were jousting, ramming their great heads together with a thud and a bellow. A *harlah* or two—rodents like hares which the herdsmen were trying to eradicate—observed our passing from safe distances. A tent of black cloth with inset white panels stood in the midst of the landscape. The man in the fur hat ran towards it and greeted me as we pulled up.

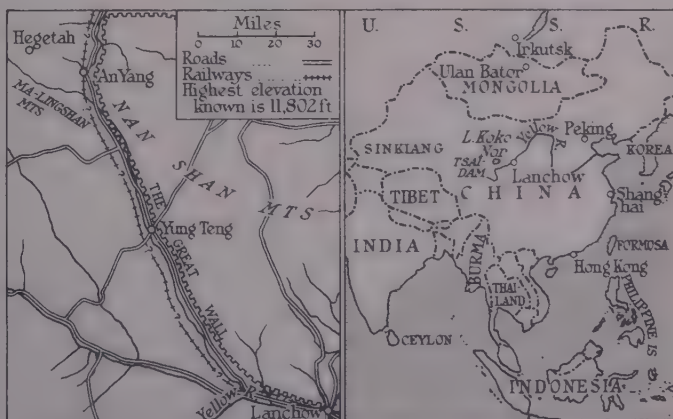
From the tent emerged the Chairman of the Cooperative, his assistant and a few other notables, all Mongols and Tibetans with crushing handshakes. They had set up this ceremonial tent to welcome me and as a fit place to entertain the foreign guest. Inside, it was warm. The

white panels let into the black yak-wool cloth made it light as well. The ground was covered with brushwood on which they had put down yak-wool blankets; and the whole village had contributed its best things—tables and dishes—in honour of the occasion. I was quite overcome.

As the herdsmen plied me with thick *chapatis* of maize flour and with *tsampa*—roasted barley flour which they taught me to mix in the palm of the hand with Tibetan tea on which lumps of yak butter are dropped—we talked about life in this bleak reach of the world.

‘Till not long ago,’ said the Chairman, whose name was Chai Hwa, ‘we had no definite place.’ Of all the things he told me about their former nomadic life this matter-of-fact phrase perhaps summed it up best of all. ‘We had no settled place to live in or to keep our beasts. We had to move all the time because the grass was eaten up. In winter we had no reserve of fodder for the animals so we lost a lot of them every year. Then there was the tax man from the old government’ (the Kuomintang). ‘We had nothing except our animals to pay the taxes with, so we moved away when we heard he was coming; over the mountains with everything we had, towards Chinghai.’ Chinghai is the region of the lake called on maps Koko Nor. The jurisdiction of the Kuomintang never effectively reached there.

As we sat round in the tent I learned a lot about those pathetic forced migrations in the face of weather, starvation and rapacious tax men. ‘We can laugh now,’ Chai Hwa said, showing his yellow teeth and taking a gulp of buttered tea. ‘I can’t tell you how hard it was in those days. But this morning we have food to offer you. Now we have houses for the first time, and good herds and fodder for the winter.’



A. J. Thomson



(Above) Loading a full-grown yak with sacks of seed. The Chairman of the Tibetan Cooperative (with embroidered hat) is supervising what is often a tricky operation with restive animals. (Below) A young herdsman adjusting the home-made 'saddle' on which the load is borne. The ropes are made of plaited yak-hair. Beyond the sheep-pen, whose walls are of rammed earth, lies one of the mounds of yak-dung dried and stored for winter fuel



Kneading tsampa in our palms, we talked for several hours. It was a delicious meal, exactly right for the chilly climate, starchy like the food of all highland people, and weighing comfortably on my stomach as we walked across to the mud-house village where the herdsmen lived. The village sheltered in an embrasure in the hillside. Long white prayer-flags snapped in the wind at the top of tall bamboo poles, one to

every house. Large mounds of yak-dung lay beyond the houses, insurance against the winter, for this is the major fuel in a treeless land.

At first sight I found it hard to realize what a haven—as they had called it again and again—this primitive place was. Only life in conditions of extreme hardship can teach you that.

The village was busy. A trio of yaks were being harnessed by the Chairman's wife, bags of

**The Chairman's house at Hegetah. The brushwood round the wall of the yard is drying out to be used later as roofing material; it will be plastered with mud to provide a watertight covering**





The Chairman's father stands between the author's driver and a herdsman; he holds up his grandson to look inside the first motor vehicle to reach the Cooperative, which aroused enormous interest





(Above) The author's interpreter trying to cope with the spate of questions from children of the Cooperative. None of them had seen a European before, and the event, in conjunction with the car, caused silent amazement at first, followed by all manner of curious questions. They explored the Land-Rover in minutest detail, its lights and the driving mirror provoking the greatest wonder. (Right) A Tibetan boy of about seven wearing a sheepskin jacket. With him is a friend, a Hui, or Muslim, Chinese boy in traditional costume





The children of the Cooperative dancing in the yard outside their school. Three of the girls had put on their best clothes to show the author how well they could look, while the others were warmly, if more shabbily, clad in sheepskin and padded cotton. The modern Chinese headgear is some indication of the changes taking place in this remote area. The school itself was built on the same pattern as the village houses, of rammed earth





seed being strapped with home-made braids on their unwilling backs. 'We are beginning to sow grass in sheltered places to help out with pasture,' Chai Hwa said as he went to lend her a hand.

His father, an old man in a brown Tibetan robe, came out of their house carrying the Chairman's youngest child. As I went in my head was brushed by a small silk banner nailed to the lintel, on which a Tibetan Buddhist prayer was written. There were two rooms, one with a fireplace where a woman was cooking, and a big mud-platform bed which in China is called *kang*; the other also had a bed, a large brass tray of charcoal to burn on cold nights, and a shrine with a butter lamp burning and a few cheap *tankas*—Lamaist paintings of the Buddhist pantheon. On one wall hung the Chairman's best hat ('the one I got married in'); and a couple of decorated chests contained the remainder of their belongings.

Playing with the baby and talking to them I got some feeling of what this mud hut meant to them when the day's work in the penetrating winds was over and they could come back to the glowing brazier and the good smell of cooking from the hearth.

The houses were all similar, each with its front courtyard sheltered by a mud wall, each with its flag sending prayers up to heaven. Rambling around I came on a yellow box fixed to a wall and, beyond it, the smallest shop I ever saw. The yellow postbox was emptied once a week, and the shop was full of women with long black plaits and striped skirts, gossiping as people do everywhere in the village store. Civilization had come to the windy valley at last.

A little over a year ago the community of herdsmen had formed a cooperative to pool their resources and abilities. They had built their village, the sheep and goat pens, and had shared out equally the work of pasturing and the stock of transport yaks. Among them only the Chairman and a few others could read and write (they were in great demand as scribes since the advent of the postbox), but they had attempted to make proper account of their year's work, to analyse their 'shortcomings', and to try out new methods in the light of their pooled experience. I was given, later on, a copy of this document—their annual report. My interpreter had great difficulty in translating it as the standard of literacy was so low. It is a record at once so heartening and so simple that it is one of my prized possessions,

a historic document written by nomads whose conditions at last allowed them to settle and lead a decent ordinary life.

'Now we'll take you to see the school,' Chai Hwa said after I had spent some time in the village. Some men rode in cheerily just then, shouting out the number of harlah they had shot. 'We used to eat those,' one said, 'but they are so tough and tasteless that now we have enough corn we don't any more.'

The school, also built by the herdsmen in their spare time, was a low mud building about thirty feet long, containing two classrooms and about forty children. There were two young men, Tibetans who had learned their work in Lanchow, teaching the pupils to read and write in their own language, and teaching, too, the rudiments of Chinese as a second language. Most of the children wore padded clothes, and almost all a trilby hat in the Tibetan manner. The girls had long braided hair and their plaits were decorated at the ends with swinging tinkling silver ornaments. Soon after I got there it was meal-time and they rushed across the school yard to the cookhouse where an old man doled out steaming chapatis and bowls of soup. After that they did a dance for me—forming a circle and singing a sweet lost sort of tune as they danced round with their plaits swinging and their red cheeks beaming.

I was reluctant to leave the Chairman and the herdsmen of Hegetah. There was an extraordinary feeling of hope about them, and I recall, amongst many similar passages in that ill-written but serious annual report, one that runs as follows:

In last winter all the cattle and sheep suffered a terrible disease [here there are four Chinese characters which represent the local dialect for foot-and-mouth disease] and they were in a comparatively serious state. So as to rescue the losses to a small size we quickly gathered all members of the Co-op together to fight against the disease with all their might. We had an overall wash of the live-stock with the medicine for three times. As a result only two died of the disease. According to old experienced members of the Co-op if this disease had happened in the past at least thirty or forty per hundred of the live-stock would have died of it.

Something of that spirit of seriousness and the will to overcome their almost insuperable difficulties came through to me during the day I spent with them. By their own efforts they were beginning to achieve something after the horrors of nomadic life.

# Around Tunisia

by FREYA STARK

*Dust in the Lion's Paw, an autobiography covering Miss Stark's work in the Middle East during the war, will be published by John Murray in the autumn*

I HAVE been travelling for a few weeks in Tunisia—a small country delightfully varied—and have been trying to remember what first brought the reality of its existence before me. Not Saint Augustine, who was bishop of Bône just across the border and appears, when I recall him, which is not as often as it might be, most usually at Ostia; there his mother died and one of the most serene partings in history took place. Not Cato, that estimable but unattractive Roman, who killed himself at Utica just up the road to Bizerta. Not Caesar, training his troops to meet elephants at Thapsus where, between the salt lake and the sea, under glades of later olive trees, the son of Pompey vainly tried to hold the great Julius at bay. Not even Severus, a man of Libya but near enough to Tunis, who became emperor of Rome and its world, and died at York in England, saddened by domestic discord and remembering no doubt the bright sun-ravaged ridges of his land.

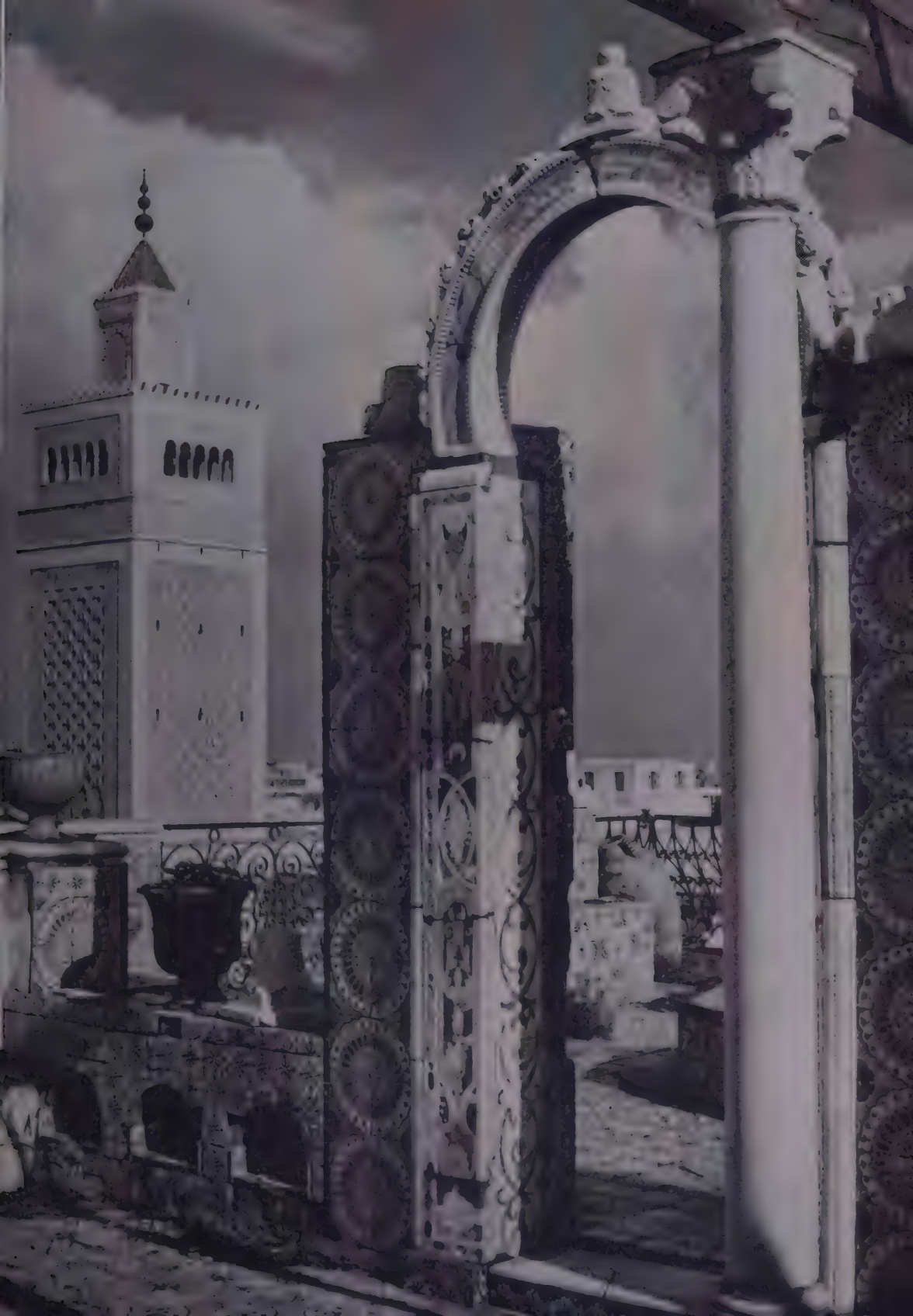
It is a country that, for all its minute size, is good at producing men. Hannibal too, for instance. His Carthage was razed and the site sown with salt by the victorious Roman, who was always merciless when he had been afraid; and little of that first city now remains except a horrid graveyard where infant bones rest in small pottery urns, sacrificed to an unpleasant god. It would surely—one may observe incidentally—be safe to assume that whatever deity one worships cannot be *more* objectionable than one is oneself, and who would wish to look out over a landscape of such sad little tombs?

But there must have been many other things to think of in the deleted Carthage, stretched impregnable between her marshes and the sea. She was never actually attacked. Her two ports

In most towns in Tunisia you can see crowded streets (left) and teeming bazaars; but perhaps only in Tunis (opposite) will you find such sophisticated elegance









The harbours of ancient Carthage, and the modern villas which cover the site of the city

are there, tucked in beside her, and looking extremely small; and the hills now flowering with aloe, cypress and mimosa, where the present world builds its villas, must contain the broken columns and mosaic floors of many a prosperous merchant who himself, in his day, built on a layer of earlier ruins.

All this busy historic crowd passes before one as one travels in Tunisia through the ages; but, as it happens, it is not one of these famous men that first made the name of Tunis vivid to my mind. I can remember the occasion, and it was at Verona, in the cathedral of a Carthaginian saint, Zeno, who lies mummified beneath his altar, his dark and bony face visible through glass. What brought him from Carthage and made him live and be sanctified in Verona? I have never known, but have often thought of him, and of many others, wandering and doing good as it were by the wayside, in a fluid and crumbling world, as uncertain no doubt in its values as we are today.

At that time the barriers were falling and fair men from German forests or the Danube were swamping the peaceful cities, and dark men of the desert or the grey-eyed Berbers of the mountains were gnawing at the settled African colonies of Rome. One can never forget this as

one travels about Tunisia today. Its eleven million inhabitants have shrunk to less than four million. In spite of its modern revival it is still an empty land, though the French—who took it in hand in 1881—have laid the foundations for a future increase, with the good roads and hotels of an era of peace.

The independent Tunisian government is continuing these efforts with an eye to tourists and a little country is produced which is almost ideally balanced between the easy and the picturesque. The variety of its history is matched by that of Nature. Its southern border is the edge of Sahara where—with sheets of salt before them—the oases of Tozeur and Nefta pack thousands of date palms tightly round their springs. A startling suddenness is the character of the oasis. A bank of red desert earth rings the watered hollow, and a different life belongs to either side. The townlets, minute but busy, that live by the sale of their dates and the commerce of the Bedouin, sit windswept clean and healthy at the edge of the solid darkness of the palms: the sun goes down in their sight more round and clear than elsewhere and the sunset wind that is strong as wine blows the white crescent of the red Tunisian flag about with a *Beau Geste* bravado.



All this is to be seen in comfort from a hotel which too many people have already discovered. It is in fact the desert made tame, and the draped white figures that walk about from outer spaces, with heads and mouths swathed against the blowing sand in folds of cotton and sometimes a straw hat on top of it all—they give a touch of reality, reminding one that sun and wind are not mere parts of the decor but really do exist.

At Gafsa the Romans built cisterns which are still in use, and water flows between cliff and oasis in a wandering stream. Here the camel caravans assemble and one can see congregations of their long shadows cast in tens or hundreds over the flat dry bed left by occasional floods. The human habitation goes back to times when the hills of Gafsa were strewn with prehistoric flints, and the Tunisian government now busily instituting municipal amenities is merely con-

tinuing the optimistic effort of its Stone-Age ancestors to make a habitable nest in what Nature intended as a waste. The caravan trade has never been great: the routes from black Africa that carried to the north cargoes of slaves, ivory and gold spread their riches to right and left from centres in Tripoli and Morocco, missing Tunisia; and now oil, to the little country's chagrin, shows every symptom of doing exactly the same.

They must make do with the old prosperity, which is bound up chiefly in crops and olive trees, of which millions grow in evenly pruned rows across the richer portions of their land—along the eastern coast for instance, reached by the great Muslim expeditions that conquered Sicily and colonized southern Spain long after the Roman decay. Fortified monasteries of their fighting orders remain to dominate the harbours—Sousse, Monastir, Mahdia and Sfax. The cells

A caravan which had started out from Gafsa



of the monks were the quarters of a garrison and their round minarets served for lighthouses as well as prayers when the Arabs had taken to piracy and the sea. Most of these places have become modern towns now, spilling beyond their walls with ports and neat sandy beaches; but Mahdia, the first capital of the invaders from Egypt, had not grown much when I saw it, and its white main street still stretched quiet and too narrow for cars along its headland. There at the very tip is a minute rock-carved basin, where white tombstones are scattered among rocks and flowering asphodel, and the women—in white too with only a slit for their eyes to show—sit in groups round their particular tomb, to spend an afternoon of gossip in the sun. Bits of the old sea-wall remain and one can read in its different techniques of stone the history of the numerous invaders building in succession—Roman, Byzantine, Muslim.

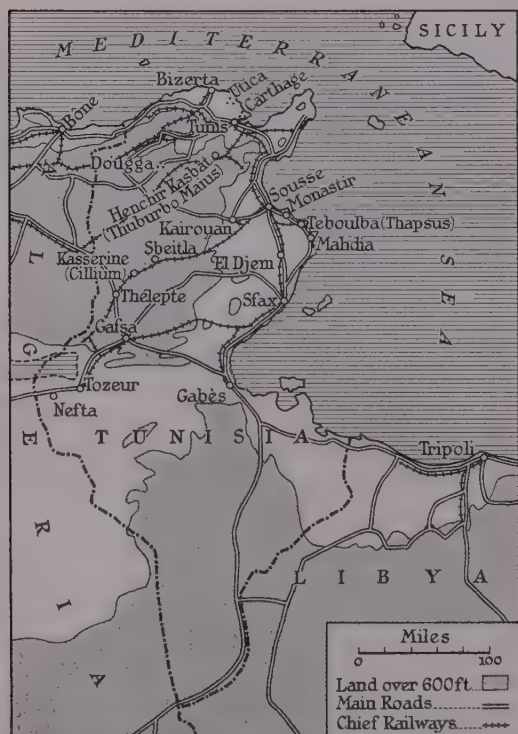
Several Muslim waves swept over the Roman West. At first they destroyed and then they built, finding their magnificent climax in Andalusian Spain, yet leaving enough in Tunisia also to comfort a historic mind. No-one can step into their mosque at Kairouan, the greatest of their

buildings, without feeling that here is a very great monument indeed.

A poor city now, with nothing much to keep it busy except its short season of pilgrimage around the Prophet's birthday, Kairouan was built by the Muslim as a central point for caravans—as indeed its name implies. And there in the first strong impulse of their faith their mosque was given a court of columns dragged from Roman forums, and as a prayer hall a forest-colonnade reminiscent of the earliest mosque in Egypt with a dome and prayer-niche (*mihrab*) of transcending beauty. Practically all of the building seen today belongs to the 9th century A.D.; though the earliest *mihrab*—A.D. 670—is said to be still visible to the eyes of faith through the marble traceries of its successor. The great minaret, adapted from the towers of Syrian churches, became the prototype for most of the charming square minarets of North Africa; and the influences of Egypt, Syria and Iraq were gathered into one harmonious plan which has interested succeeding architects through the ages. The columns and their capitals—especially in the court—are promiscuously and roughly put together and the delicacy of the workmanship is kept for newer traceries in wood or marble, and for the carving of the dome. But all imperfection that there may be is lost in the directness and nobility of a structure whose intention one feels irresistibly was the glory of God and not of man.

In a small room beyond the prayer hall, a librarian keeps the parchments of Kairouan. Nothing in that library, he told me, loitering with his soft brown eyes among his treasures, is later than the 11th century. Written in the brown-black sweeps of the Kufic—the earliest Arabic script—or tooled exquisitely with gold and blue and crimson, the rare pages are stacked in their black cases, and the most precious of all are the leaves of a Koran written on dark blue parchment in gold. We talked of a gospel of the age of Justinian, silver on purple, now in the monastery of Patmos. These librarians live in a rarefied world. He knew about it but had never been outside Tunisia, nor—I felt—did he ever wander much beyond the 11th century himself. He had the face of a happy man.

Kairouan is a whitewashed city, dazzling in an open landscape sparsely provided with trees. In a few years it should be embowered in eucalyptus. The municipality are lavishly planting, and this softening might improve its outskirts which are dusty. But the white streets round the sanctuary,



A. J. Thornton





**The splendid 9th-century mosque at Kairouan, with its stolen Roman columns; and the finely wrought interior**

with their rough porches resting on captured marble columns, need no help. They have their own dignity and repose. The doorways, the shutters, the iron grilles that make their windows safe and attractive, and even sometimes their tombstones, are painted a turquoise blue; and this with the general whitewash of the houses gives to these towns a lightness unknown to the rest of the Arab world.

As one travels from the south, by Kairouan to the eastern seaboard, the country changes, first to steppe and then to tillage, to long stretches where the alfalfa grass grows and is exported for paper, and to plains where in April a wild red gladiolus stars the wheat. Here the Romans built their little cities, or took them over from the earlier Carthaginians, choosing slopes and



*Philip Boucas*





Philip Boucas

**The amphitheatre at El Djem, a village on the site of the ancient city of Thysdrus, measures 163 yards by 133. It is considered to be the finest Roman remain in the whole of North Africa**

necks of land above some fertile plain, often with a *oued*, a torrent bed, within reach for their water, or else scattered along the sea-plain where modern observation from the air has verified the thickly clustered habitations whose traces on the ground are lost. A remarkable number of these sites have been excavated, if one considers the smallness of Tunisia and its resources: recovered names—Thélepte, Cillium, Sufetula—are on the Kairouan road, with more or less of their ancient life remaining for the archaeologist to deal with. Cillium is Kasserine and some American soldier may have noticed a yellow stone arch of the later Empire on the brow of an opposite hill as he faced that unpleasant gap in 1943. Sufetula is Sbeitla, its name corrupted through the centuries. One can walk down the white flags of its streets and enter the colonnade below its temples, and follow from one mosaic floor to another the plans of its easy colonial houses. The passage of time is marked in these cities sometimes happily and sometimes sadly. If the temple holds the

centre, there is usually a church or two near by, built in a later day with re-adapted columns. At Sbeitla there is a charming font of white mosaic with steps for complete immersion let down into the ground. Dougga is the pleasantest of these cities, seated with courts and temples still in order on a hillside of olives above a gentle view. At Utica, on the northern coast, where Cato died, the well-to-do houses still show little ponds in their courts, semicircular basins lined with mosaic, picturing boats, or the many varieties of fish with which they were well acquainted, or patterns of peacocks and flowers. The columns and mosaics of Tunisia must have been innumerable in the Roman age. The museums there have no space left to house them and many lie open to the sky, enclosed in shallow remnants of their walls, at one with the profusion of flowers that cascade through the Tunisian spring. At *Thurburbo Maius*—whose barbaro-Roman name tells its own story—the fine halls of the earlier ages have been reinhabited by later Romans who



clapped their rough stonework onto the delicate floors after the two-century interval, mutely eloquent, during which the Vandals came and went.

A certain melancholy one would think would be created by wandering through a country populated so very thickly by its past: to see for instance the amphitheatre of El Djem, built for 60,000 spectators, alone among empty miles of

olive trees or mere grazing-land, with scarcely a village in sight.

It is not so, however, and the atmosphere of Tunisia is not that of decay. It is rather like an old house filled with odd collections brought by former owners, whose descendants take this background for granted and use it when they can. One of the best Islamic museums in one of the loveliest of the old Arab houses is being

**Dougga dates from Punic times, commanding the road into Carthage, but its temples are Roman**







The fortified monastery at Monastir, built by Muslim orders which fought their way to Spain

prepared by M. Abdul Wahab, the present curator, with a feeling for the living past of his country which many more recent histories have long since ceased to inspire. The young Tunisian has no difficulty in seeing his President moving among the statesmen of the Western world while Berber inhabitants of the mountains live at another extreme in strange primaeval houses scooped out of the hardened earth of their hills. Tunisia has acquired a perspective of life, which is never absolute, but grows and dwindles, and resurrects itself in infinite variety from every sort of ashes. What other conclusion could one expect with Carthage buried under its red hills and the modern capital with cars and shops and cinemas alive beside it? No city was ever more certainly deleted than Carthage: it died. Yet because of its fine situation a Roman city grew where it had been. What is excavated on the site is nearly all Roman and there are few ruins in the country more pleasant to loiter in on a spring morning than the church of St Cyprian or the Antonine baths with the Mediterranean gentle and misty beyond them. Yet it is Carthage that one thinks of as one paces those gigantic foundations. The name haunts one and survives. Hannibal and Hamilcar are remembered (there is a little

railway station called Amilcar): and it would surprise me if there were not a good many Punic sympathies among the young Tunisian intelligentsia of today. One can lose one's perspective as well as gain it by living in close proximity with one's past.

With all this, in a Mediterranean world unpleasantly bitter at the moment, Tunisia has kept an admirable measure of detachment. It has obtained its liberties with firmness and good manners, and kept a sense of proportion throughout: and this is the doing of a President who shows every sign of being a statesman as well.

Yet he himself is the product of the incredibly mixed history, the many ancient or recent invasions, the tumults and sorrows of the Tunisian past. If one looks into the matter, we are all extremely mixed in the world today, and the fact makes nonsense fundamentally of the nationalisms that do much to spoil our lives: it is perhaps a blessing for the Tunisians to have a history which makes this mixture so patent that they can think of themselves simply and kindly as members of the human family, and concentrate on the business of living profitably and agreeably with other members of the same species who come to visit them from time to time in the tourist season.